

Secretary of State
D.H.G. 37.



Private Secretary

Mr Wright

We shall need to protect Mr Stewart's confidence, but in view of the Secretary of State's doubts whether the use of Flasher had really been agreed, he

cc: PS/PUS
Mr Weston

SECRET papers in this

ALQ050/3

11 JUN 1982

Stewart

3/6

Mr. Gillmore
Mrs. Tranter
no further news?
MH 9/6

FLASHER

ALQ050/109

1. In my minute of 1 June recording the discussion of Chiefs of Staff that day, I referred to a 'decision' allegedly reached on the deployment of a new British laser destruction weapon called Flasher. I have now received some explanation on a personal basis from Mr Stewart in the MOD.

2. Flasher is apparently a new British device on which a development programme has been completed, designed for use on ships against attacking aircraft. It consists of a relatively small laser which produces a beam of very high intensity light. The Navy Department believe that this could be a useful means of defending shipping against aircraft by dazzling pilots. I understand from Mr Stewart that at a range of about 5 kms the effect of the laser is merely to dazzle. But if the pilot persists in his attack and approaches to within 1 km of the laser source he would run the risk of being blinded.

3. Mr Stewart believes that the deployment of this weapon to the fleet in the South Atlantic is imminent. No papers have been circulated in the MOD outside the Private Office and the office of the CDS. Nevertheless, Mr Stewart believes that the CDS has spoken about this to the Prime Minister, who has allegedly given her approval for its deployment to the fleet and subsequent use against Argentine air attack. Mr Stewart told me that he had written a minute expressing misgivings about the deployment of this weapon and that he understood Mr Nott to share these misgivings. It appears however that by going straight to the Prime Minister the CDS has bypassed objections inside the MOD.

4. I have not marked this minute to the Private Secretary but you may wish to do so.

D H Gillmore

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3 June 1982